

at her feet. One small slain bud caught in the lace of her dress—"like a drop of blood from the stricken heart of love," she thought.

Again his glance sought the clock and this time he started exaggeratedly when he beheld its warning.

"And I am supposed to be dining at Brierly's," he murmured, as if to himself, and reaching for his hat and stick, "not much time to lose." Here he faced Margaret, showed a composed surface interest in her prettiness and bowed slightly. "I beg your pardon, dear Madam, for so curt a leave-taking, but really I find myself deprived of the pleasure of your name. I am due to dine with Mr. Brierly—at a house where I am to meet the girl whom I hope to make my wife. Good-night."

He turned on his heel, stroke through the curtains, whipped them conclusively to behind him and disappeared.

"Charlie!" cried Margaret, rather angrily. Then she bethought herself that she was using a name too familiar for the conditions.

"Charles," she ventured, ingratiatingly. Then she had doubts of that. "Mr. Lawlor."

But at this respectful point, her ear, which had been listening in vain for his returning step, heard now the distant click of the closing front door.

He was indeed gone. Gone. And gone to meet the girl whom he hoped to make his wife! Now what could he mean by that? And whom could he mean? What girl was to be at Brierly's? Margaret jumped excitedly to her feet.

Flying to the bell, she rang instantly. Kitty was clever, but, not being supernaturally so, she appeared without wraps and was rated for it. The rating kept up even after the wraps had been produced and were being draped about their owner.

"Pardon," murmured Kitty defensively, "I thought, miss, you said you were not going out."

"Not going out!" objected Margaret indignantly. "Why, I'm to dine at the Brierly's."

Pasque—Florida

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Darrow, disgusted, turned on his heel; Haltren laughed. The sound of his own laugh amused him, and he laughed again.

"I don't see the humor," said the major. "The *Dione* is blown half-way to the Bermudas by this time." He added, with a tragic gesture of his fat arms; "Are you aware that Mrs. Jack Onderdonk is aboard?"

The possible fate of Manhattan's queen regent so horrified Major Brent that his congested features assumed the expression of an alarmed tadpole.

But Haltren, the unaccustomed taste of mirth in his throat once more, stood there, dripping, dishevelled, and laughing. For four years he had missed the life he had been bred to; he had missed even what he despised in it, and his life at moments had become a hell of isolation. Time dulled the edges of his loneliness; solitude, if it hurts, sometimes cures too. But he was not yet cured of longing for that self-forbidden city in the North. He desired it—he desired the arid wilderness of its treeless streets, its incessant sounds, its restless energy; he desired its pleasures, its frivolous days and nights, its satiated security, its ennui. Its life had been his life, its people his people, and he longed for it with a desire that racked him.

"What the devil are you laughing at, Haltren?" asked the major, tartly.

"Was I laughing?" said the young man. "Well—now I will say good-bye, Major Brent. Your yacht will steam in before night and send a boat for you; and I shall have my lagoons to myself again....I have been here a long time....I don't know why I laughed just now. There was, indeed, no reason." He turned and looked at the cabin skylights. "It's hard to realize that you and Darrow and—others—are here, and that there's a whole yacht-load of fellow-creatures—and Mrs. Vann Onderdonk—wobbling about the Atlantic near by. Fashionable people have never before come here—even intelligent people rarely penetrate this wilderness....I—I have a plantation a few miles below—oranges and things, you know." He hesitated, almost wistfully. "I don't suppose you and your guests would care to stop there for a few hours, if your yacht is late."

"No," said the major, "we don't care to."

"Perhaps Haltren will stay aboard the wreck with us until the *Dione* comes in," suggested Darrow.

"I dare say you have a camp hereabouts," said the major, staring at Haltren; "no doubt you'd be more comfortable there."

"Thanks," said Haltren; pleasantly; "I have my camp a mile below." He offered his hand to Darrow, who, too angry to speak, nodded violently towards the cabin.

"How can I?" asked Haltren. Good-bye. And I'll say good-bye to you, major—"

"Good-bye," muttered the major, attempting to clasp his fat little hands behind his back.

Haltren, who had no idea of offering his hand, stood still a moment, glancing at the cabin skylights; then, with a final nod to Darrow, he deliberately slid overboard and waded away, knee-deep, towards the palm-fringed shore.

Darrow could not contain himself. "Major Brent," he said, "I suppose you don't realize that Haltren saved the lives of every soul aboard this launch. The major's inflamed eyes popped out.

"Eh? What's that?"

"More than that," said Darrow, "he came back from safety to risk his life. As it was he lost his boat and his gun—"

"Damnation!" broke out the major; "you don't expect me to ask him to stay and meet the wife he deserted four years ago!"

And he waddled off to the engine-room, where the engineer and his assistant were tinkering at the wrecked engine.

Darrow went down into the sloppy cabin, where on a couch, Mrs. Castle lay, ill from the shock of the recent catastrophe; and beside her stood an attractive girl stirring sweet spirits of ammonia in a tumbler.

Her eyes were fixed on the open port-hole. Through that port-hole the lagoon was visible; so was Haltren, wading shoreward, a solitary figure against the fringed rampart of the wilderness.

"Is Mrs. Castle better?" asked Darrow.

"I think so; I think she is asleep," said the girl, calmly.

There was a pause; then Darrow took the tumbler and stirred the contents.

"Do you know who it was that got us out of that pickle?"

"Yes," she said; "my husband."

"I suppose you could hear what we said on deck."

There was no answer.

"Could you, Kathleen?"

"Yes."

Darrow stared into the tumbler, tasted the medicine, and frowned.

"Isn't there— isn't there a chance—a ghost of a chance?" he asked.

"I think not," she answered—"I am sure not. I shall never see him again."

"I meant for myself," said Darrow, deliberately, looking her full in the face. She crimsoned to her temples, then her eyes flashed violet fire.

"Not the slightest," she said.

"Thanks," said Darrow, flippantly; "I only wanted to know."

"You know now, don't you?" she asked, a trifle excited, yet realizing instinctively that somehow she had been tricked. And yet, until that moment, she had believed Darrow to be her slave. He had been and was still; but she was not longer certain, and her uncertainty confused her.

"Do you mean to say that you have any human feeling left for that vagabond?" demanded Darrow. So earnest was he that his tanned face grew tense and white.

"I'll tell you," she said, breathlessly, "that from this moment I have no human feeling left for you! And I never had! I know it now; never! never! I had rather be the divorced wife of Jack Haltren than the wife of any man alive!"

The angry beauty of her young face was his reward; he turned away and climbed the companion. And in the shattered wheel-house he faced his own trouble, muttering: "I've done my best; I've tried to show the pluck

he showed. He's got his chance now!" And he leaned heavily on the wheel, covering his eyes with his hands; for he was fiercely in love, and he had destroyed for a friend's sake all that he had ever hoped for.

But there was more to be done; he aroused himself presently and wandered around to the engine-room, where the major was prowling about, fussing and fuming and bullying his engineer. "Major," said Darrow, guilelessly, "do you suppose Haltren's appearance has upset his wife?"

"Eh?" said the major. "No, I don't! I refuse to believe that a woman of Mrs. Haltren's sense and personal dignity could be upset by such a man! By gad! sir, if I thought it—for one instant, sir—for one second—I'd reason with her. I'd presume so far as to express my personal opinion of this fellow Haltren!"

"Perhaps I'd better speak to her," began Darrow.

"No sir! Why the devil should you assume that liberty?" demanded Major Brent. "Allow me, sir; allow me! Mrs. Haltren is my guest!"

The major's long-latent jealousy of Darrow was now fully ablaze; purple, pop-eyed, and puffing he toddled down the companion on his errand of consolation. Darrow watched him go. "That settles him!" he said. Then he called the engineer over and bade him rig up and launch the portable canoe.

"Put one paddle in it, Johnson, and say to Mrs. Haltren that she had better paddle north, because a mile below there is a camp belonging to a man whom Major Brent and I do not wish to have her meet."

The grimy engineer hauled out the packet which, when put together, was warranted to become a full-fledged canoe.

"Lord! how she'll hate us all, even poor Johnson," murmured Darrow.

"I don't know much about Kathleen Haltren, but is she doesn't paddle south I'll eat cotton-waste with oil-dressing for dinner!"

At that moment the major reappeared toddling excitedly towards the stern.

"What on earth is the trouble?" asked Darrow. "Is there a pizen serpent aboard?"

"Trouble!" stammered the major. "Who said there was any trouble? Don't be an ass, sir! Don't even look like an ass, sir! Damnation!"

And he trotted furiously into the engine-room.

Darrow climbed to the wheel-house once more, fished out a pair of binoculars, and fixed them on the inlet and the strip of Atlantic beyond.

"If the *Dione* isn't in by three o'clock, Haltren will have his chance," he muttered.

He was still inspecting the ocean and his watch alternately when Mrs. Haltren came on deck.

"Did you send me the canoe?" she asked, with cool unconcern.

"It's for anybody," he said, morosely. "Somebody ought to take a snap-shot of the scene of our disaster. If you don't want the canoe, I'll take it."

She had her camera in her hand; it was possible he had noticed it, although he appeared to be very busy with his binoculars.

He was also rude enough to turn his back. She hesitated, looked up the lagoon and down the lagoon. She could only see half a mile south, because Flyover Point blocked the view.

"If Mrs. Castle is nervous you will be near the cabin?" she asked, coldly. "I'll be here," he said.

"And you may say to Major Brent," she added, "that he need not send me further orders by his engineer, and that I shall paddle wherever caprice invites me."

A few moments later a portable canoe glided out from under the stern of the launch. In it, lazily wielding the polished paddle, sat young Mrs. Haltren bareheaded, barearmed, singing as sweetly as the little cardinal, who in sheer surprise at the loveliness of song and singer. Like a homing pigeon the canoe circled to take its bearings once, then glided away due south.

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"A woman in oil-skins hung to the companion rail."